

MUHLENBERG
20/20
VISION

REPORT
TO THE COMMUNITY
2018

Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision is a community driven initiative to prepare Muhlenberg County for the future by understanding where we have been, where we want to go, and how we plan to get there. By giving everyone a voice in the goals and priorities of the County, Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision strives to bring people together to use their talents, education, and experience to lead Muhlenberg County into the future.

Message from the Executive Committee

To all Muhlenberg County citizens:

Creating a vision for Muhlenberg County. When this idea was introduced in 2014, to most people it was just a vague, undefined idea. The question in everyone's mind was, "What does the word vision mean and how do we create it?" Four years later, "Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision" is a term that many Muhlenberg Countians recognize and embrace as the community works together to accomplish goals set by YOU, celebrate successes, and figure out the next steps to continually make Muhlenberg County a better place to live, work and play.

In order to do this, Muhlenberg 20/20 works toward addressing 6 goals that were identified during community conversations and summits throughout the County.

The projects described on the following pages were identified as priorities through our community conversations and carried out by residents like you. Since 2016, many of the projects show considerable progress and in some cases, completion. Many are creating an impact and building excitement throughout the county. Seeing items that once seemed impossible be "checked off the list" encourages others to get involved and make more things happen. We love seeing new faces join us to brainstorm, think "outside the box", and be a part of this evolving movement in Muhlenberg County!

As we embark on a 2nd round of identifying projects to undertake, we remain committed to Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision, its goals and continued success. We invite all of you to get involved as we move toward the future, and the Muhlenberg our community envisions.

Sincerely,

The Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision
Executive Committee

Susan Wells
Logan Porter
Gary Jones
Alyssa Manning
Vicki Yonts
Karen Robinson



2017 Community Organization of the Year

MUHLENBERG

20/20

VISION

GOALS FOR MUHLENBERG COUNTY

Established by County residents - Fall 2016

1. ***Quality Education and Training***
2. ***Supporting and Attracting Businesses and Creating Jobs***
3. ***Collaboration and Leadership***
4. ***Health, Safety and Well-Being***
5. ***Tourism, Entertainment and Arts***
6. ***Access to Public Services***

QUALITY EDUCATION & TRAINING

GOAL #1: Muhlenberg should be a community with world class education and training that produces trained and capable individuals for the diverse employment opportunities that help improve personal prosperity.

Priorities Identified

1. Invest in programs / services that ensure successful graduation and transition to college or productive adulthood.
2. Offer economic development incentives and education skills training to encourage students to remain in or return to Muhlenberg County.

Priority Actions Taken

Muhlenberg Achieves Program Established

Established in 2016, this program of the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation is focused on creating a college-going culture, both at MCHS and throughout the County. The program provides additional support for Muhlenberg seniors – providing college tours, seminars, and financial aid information. An e-COACH program also pairs high school seniors with community members who help them successfully transition from high school to post-secondary education, providing support and encouragement and helping Muhlenberg increase the number of students who successfully enroll in training after high school.



Kentucky College Coach added at MCHS

With grants from AmeriCorps and the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation, a new Kentucky College Coach position was established at MCHS. The coach not only provides one-on-one support for students in grades 9 – 12, but also assists in the planning and implementation of college and career readiness events including College Application Week, FAFSA Completion Open House sessions, ACT prep workshops, and other engagements.



MARTIN SCHOLARS

Martin Scholars and GED Learn & Earn Programs Increase Financial Incentives

The Martin Scholars program offers financial incentives for Muhlenberg adults returning to complete an associate's degree at MCC. This program encourages adults who are already living in Muhlenberg the opportunity to increase their job and financial prospects by completing a degree. Enrolled students receive \$250 each semester, and in 2018-2019, enrolled full-time students will receive \$500 each semester. As an added incentive to complete a degree, enrolled students also receive \$400 upon graduation.

The GED Learn & Earn program was established through a partnership with the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation and ACE2 Adult Education program. This program provides GED students with a \$50 incentive each time they complete a section of the GED, and an additional \$50 incentive when they complete the GED.



Other Related Community Actions

- The Muhlenberg County School system has implemented a new leadership development program for aspiring school administrators – developing local leaders who will be ready to lead our school system in the future.
- Beginning fall 2019, Muhlenberg County High School will offer a new Advanced Integrated Technology Dual credit program, allowing students to complete manufacturing certifications while still in high school.
- To create more open communication between the school system and the public, schools now maintain Facebook pages, newsletters are regularly distributed to community members, and all school board meetings move to various locations in the county and are now recorded and posted online for public access.
- SOAR's Early Childhood Education efforts continue to grow, expanding access to Ready! for Kindergarten classes to all County families and distributing over 30,000 free books annually to Muhlenberg children.
- Recruitment for for Imagination Library has expanded, such that 84% of children under 5 in Muhlenberg County now receive a free book in the mail every month!



ATTRACT BUSINESS AND CREATE JOBS

GOAL #2: Muhlenberg will be a community with strong and diverse employers, nurtured entrepreneurs and increased economic opportunity for residents.

Priorities Identified

1. Become a fully certified Work Ready county with a positive work ethic.

Priority Actions Taken

Local Businesses Expand and Grow Jobs

Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress is working closing with County businesses to support their growth and expansion. Over the last 2 years, local business expansions have been responsible for approximately 250 new jobs.

Soft Skills Programs Added at all Grade Levels at Muhlenberg County Schools

Starting in 2018-19, the Muhlenberg County School System has added soft skills instruction in all classes from Kindergarten through 12th grade, emphasizing workforce skills for County students. Elementary grades will have emphasis on manners and junior high will emphasize interview techniques, while high school students will focus on the full gamut of soft skills needed in the workforce.



Work Ethic Seal Offered for Graduating Seniors

Through a regional partnership, a Work Ethics Seal is now offered for graduating seniors in Muhlenberg County. High school seniors can graduate with this distinction, showing that they have proven their employability skills with regular school attendance, grade point average, and participation in community service work.



Free Classes and Micro-Loans available for Muhlenberg County Entrepreneurs

By securing grant funding from the USDA and the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation, Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress now offers free entrepreneur classes and technical assistance to encourage new businesses. Classes help future business owners develop business plans, learn marketing, and understand financing. Students completing classes are eligible to apply for micro-loans set aside for Muhlenberg County to help start their new business.



Other Related Community Actions:

- New Vocational training opportunities have been developed in partnership with Madisonville Community College including an electrical lineman program and a soon to be established advanced manufacturing program.
- A strong relationship with Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development and other state agencies has been established, with visits from the Governor and Lt. Governor as well as the Secretaries and Commissioners of several state cabinets.
- Secured status as Opportunity Zone for Paradise Regional Business Park, adding federal tax incentives for businesses investing there.
- Muhlenberg was re-certified as a Work Ready Community in Progress in August 2018, showing significant improvements in work ready qualifying areas such as educational attainment and high school graduation rate.
- Regional collaboratives formed to support entrepreneurship and business development.
- Lobbied for the passage of House Bill 114, providing additional annual funding from the state for economic development infrastructure, including the addition of a gas line for Paradise Regional Business Park.
- Muhlenberg County Opportunity Center starting new program for the intellectually impaired, hiring approximately 25 with a starting pay of \$12/hour



Governor Matt Bevin announcing the Paradise Regional Business Park as an Opportunity Zone Location

COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

GOAL #3: Muhlenberg will be a proud community that is inspired by strong leadership and the collaboration of its many organizations, businesses and institutions.

Priorities Identified

1. Promote a sense of pride and responsibility in our county by revitalizing communities and clean up rundown areas.
2. Embrace collaboration vs. competitiveness throughout our county.

Priority Actions Taken

Elected Officials Participate in Quarterly Roundtable Meetings

Local officials now participate in quarterly roundtable meetings hosted by Muhlenberg 20/20. These meetings allow officials to share and solve issues which affect the full County, utilizing a collaborative, rather than competitive approach. Elected officials are also invited to learn more about programs available to our county, through special speakers on topics such as low cost housing opportunities, litter abatement, and the removal of condemned properties.



Drakesboro Property Clean-up

Through a collaborative partnership with the County's Fiscal Court, the City of Drakesboro and the Muhlenberg County Job Corps, a pilot project was launched in Drakesboro to clean up dilapidated buildings and create a more appealing green space. With Muhlenberg 20/20 bringing the partners together, Environmental Protection Agency approval was secured and several condemned properties were eliminated. The process employed for this successful pilot project has been shared with other local leaders and plans are underway to begin a similar program in other cities.

Drakesboro Property Clean-up... (Continued)



Other Related Community Actions:

- Established collaborative County-wide committees to pursue actions towards all goals identified through Muhlenberg 20/20 work.
- Established a core group of pastors and continue to meet occasionally to find opportunities to pursue local mission work in Muhlenberg County.
- Work to support the More Muhlenberg initiative through Chamber projects.
- Engaged in County-wide public awareness campaign to deter littering and clean up public areas.
- Provided training to City/County Officials regarding HUD Block Grants.
- Established Grant Information Center at Muhlenberg library to assist Muhlenberg residents in identifying grant opportunities for local projects.
- Secured grant to send officials to KY League of Cities meeting on Abandoned Properties.
- Promote volunteerism regularly via Facebook for other community organizations in Muhlenberg.
- Addressed Graham flooding issues by coordinating and promoting a beaver hunt through a partnership with Eastern Kentucky trappers.

PROMOTING HEALTH, SAFETY & WELL-BEING

GOAL #4: Muhlenberg will be a community with coordinated services that promote personal wellness, ensure public safety, and support the needs of the community's citizens, especially those most vulnerable.

Priorities Identified

1. Support a full service hospital that provides treatment and educational services.
2. Support comprehensive drug prevention and educational services.

Priority Actions Taken

Muhlenberg Hospital Grows through Partnership with Owensboro Health



In January 2017, Owensboro Health opened the Muhlenberg Healthplex which brought Urgent Care, Primary Care, Orthopedics, Radiology and Lab to one convenient location. There is also a pharmacy located inside the Healthplex which is owned and run by Clinic Pharmacy making filling prescriptions easier on patients.

In the last two years, Owensboro Health has brought additional providers in Primary Care, Cardiology, Oncology, Urology and new general surgeons to practice in Muhlenberg County.

Faith Partners Program established in Muhlenberg County Churches

Faith Partners, Inc. is a national organization which mobilizes the resources of the faith community to address alcohol and drug issues. Utilizing a Martin Foundation grant, Faith Partners was invited to train church members over 18 months, forming local congregational team ministries to address substance abuse and other addictions. Since the conclusion of the training, Second Baptist has continued convening local Faith Partners ministries and is in the process of becoming a Celebrate Recovery Site.



Muhlenberg County Educators Receive Drug Education

Local law enforcement joined forces with Champions for a Drug Free Muhlenberg County to provide school staff with awareness training of substance use and abuse. Employees that are home-based educators also received training to learn about drug safety when teaching in the home.

Attorney General names Muhlenberg as partner in Opioid Disposal Program

Kentucky's Attorney General Andy Beshear launched the Kentucky Opioid Disposal Program in Aug. 2017, naming Champions for a Drug Free Muhlenberg County as a partner in the program in 2018. The program is the state's first initiative that will allow Kentuckians to safely dispose of opioid medications at home. The program distributes the drug deactivation pouches, Deterra, which allow Kentuckians to dispose of their unused prescription opioids in a completely safe and environmentally friendly manner.



Other Related Community Actions

- Champions for a Drug Free Muhlenberg County added a coordinator position and is currently working with County-wide partners toward creating a comprehensive program of prevention education services which will allow Muhlenberg to apply for federal status as a Drug Free Community.
- MCHS's STAND (Students Teaching Against Negative Decisions) continues to utilize peer education to spread prevention efforts throughout Muhlenberg's student population. In addition, STAND members will now hold seats on the Champions committee, allowing for even greater collaboration.
- Anti-drug Curriculum is being taught at all elementary, middle and high school campuses, utilizing a combination of community volunteers, law enforcement and new campus resource officers.
- Over 50 community partners came together to create a collaborative and full-scale emergency response plan for the Muhlenberg County School system.
- Owensboro Health Muhlenberg Community Hospital's EMS staff secured grant funding to train Muhlenberg County educators and Churches in "Stop the Bleed" techniques.
- Muhlenberg County Law enforcement agencies have collaboratively provided active shooter training for Muhlenberg County schools and other organizations, utilizing new simulation equipment.
- Muhlenberg County Schools has actively implemented safety measures, including training staff, adding student resource officers, and safety improvements to exterior doors and facilities.



TOURISM, ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS

GOAL #5: Muhlenberg will be a community where existing cultural assets are leveraged and new amenities are sought to improve the County's reputation as a destination for tourists and a dynamic environment for residents.

Priorities Identified

1. Promote our musical heritage with additional events as well as possibly creating a new musical history museum.
2. Develop Lake Malone with added recreational facilities, such as a larger beach, camping areas, and more lake access points.

Priority Actions Taken

Muhlenberg 20/20 Tourism Committee Formed

A county-wide committee, now works collaboratively to advance Muhlenberg County as a destination for Tourism. Membership includes not only local citizens, but all three tourism commissions, County parks, performing arts venues and arts councils. Working together, this group has been involved with projects such as bringing a Muhlenberg County booth back to the Kentucky State Fair, developing County-wide tourism itineraries to be shared regionally, researching options to promote ATV usage in the County, and pursuing sports tourism opportunities.



Muhlenberg County Music Museum Opens in New Location in Central City



Through the efforts of Central City Tourism, Muhlenberg is now the home of a music museum which pays tribute to musicians associated with the County, including the Everly Brothers, John Prine, Merle Travis and Jim Walker.

Outdoor Venues provide Summer Entertainment

In addition to Muhlenberg's successful indoor venues (Martin Hall, the Merle Travis Center and the Palace Theatre), Muhlenberg now boasts a state of the art outdoor theatre in Lu-Ray Park. With a grand opening in 2018, Lu-Ray hosts a summer movie series as well as a variety of outdoor concerts and events. During the summer months, Muhlenberg County residents can also enjoy Saturdays on the Square in Greenville which heeded the call for dynamic tourism activities by focusing on booking well-known acts for their summer concert series.



New Docks and Improved Services at Lake Malone State Park

Muhlenberg County has a love for Lake Malone! When the community was threatened with closure of the Lake Malone State Park dock area, a community led effort anchored by the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation funded new docks and upgraded gas pumps at the State Park. The momentum continued as additional sand was added to the beach and the concession stand was once again open for the summer.



Improvements were made to the campsite areas with the assistance of Muhlenberg County Job Corp. Additional events are now hosted at Lake Malone including the Greater Muhlenberg County Chamber of Commerce Fishing Tournament, Take a Kid Fishing Day, and Kayaking for a Cause.

Other Related Community Actions: Supporting Tourism

- Muhlenberg County Park now hosts 15-18 regional baseball tournaments annually at Ray Jones Athletic Complex, bringing outside investment to the community. To build on that success, an indoor facility is now being planned which will host not only local youth teams, but also regional youth basketball, volleyball, and archery tournaments.
- More Muhlenberg has been developed as a multi-entity project, and has created videos featuring Muhlenberg County, as well as a one-stop website featuring Muhlenberg destinations.
- County Tourism entities worked collaboratively to plan County-wide activities to promote the 2017 Solar Eclipse and Run for the Fallen.
- Felix E. Martin Jr. Hall now employs two full-time positions to host over 300 events each year, and drawing an audience of over 30,000 people annually. Community sponsors support an annual season of professional touring productions.
- The Muhlenberg County Arts Council has opened a new community space in Central City and hosts regular events promoting and providing access to local arts in Muhlenberg County.
- Greenville's Squash & Gobble festival expanded to over 150 booths in 2018, drawing larger crowds and additional outside investment in the community.
- Utilizing grant and private donation funding, the Four Legends Fountain and monument in Drakesboro was refurbished and rededicated.
- Campaign is underway to gain local support to renovate and save Spring Ridge School, the only remaining 2-room schoolhouse in Kentucky.



ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

GOAL #5: Muhlenberg County will be a community where government and public services are responsive to local wants and needs including transportation, communication and governance issues.

Priorities Identified

1. Explore public transportation opportunities.
2. Make low income housing more readily available

Priority Actions Taken

Ride to Work Program Established

Through a partnership with Pennyryle Allied Community Services (PACS) and the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation, Muhlenberg is now the home to a new rides program to help alleviate difficulties securing transportation for employment or education. With 24 hours notice and for just \$2 round trip, riders can schedule a ride from anywhere in Muhlenberg County to their work or school in the County. This program, already serving over 60 people monthly, has allowed residents the security of dependable transportation, allowing them to pursue opportunities for jobs and education.

NEED A RIDE TO WORK OR SCHOOL?
ANYWHERE IN MUHLENBERG COUNTY OR TO THE MADISONVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CENTRAL CITY CAMPUS
ONLY \$2 ROUND TRIP THAT'S RIGHT! ONLY \$1 EACH WAY
CALL PACS 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE
CHATMAN ELLIS 270-931-5118 OR MISSY BOWMAN 270-931-5119



Other Related Community Actions:

- Muhlenberg 20/20 members attended the KY Housing Summit, meeting with state experts to identify state-wide opportunities for low-income housing.
- To further identify the need for housing solutions, a homeless count was conducted in Muhlenberg County, with findings reported to the state for future resource allocations.
- A landlord survey was also conducted to identify available housing as well as potential housing issues and shortages.
- The new Central City Water Plant awarded 2017 KWWOA Kentucky State Water Plant of the Year Award, KWWOA 2017 Western Chapter "Outstanding Water Plant" Award and KWWOA 2017 Earl T. Mitchell Award.
- The City of Greenville will also break ground in 2018 on a new \$7.5 million water treatment plant, radio read meters, and energy efficiency lighting project as well as completing the sidewalk renovation of West Main Cross.
- The City of Central City secured state grant funding to implement a large-scale downtown renovation which will include upgraded sidewalks and lighting, as well as upgrading water and sewer lines and moving utility lines underground.
- Muhlenberg County Public Library will open expanded facilities in Greenville in 2018.

MUHLENBERG 20/20 VISION: THE STORY

The Muhlenberg 20/20 process began in 2014, when community members asked the question, **“What is our vision for Muhlenberg County’s future?”** This question kicked off a local movement that is still going strong.

During the next year, **the community came together** to explore the idea of creating a vision. A committee made up of local volunteer members reviewed the results of a Muhlenberg County needs assessment study conducted in 2008, researched community visioning across the nation, and talked with visioning project leaders in other communities such as Christian County, KY and Madison, IN.



Using lessons learned from the research, **Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision was born.** The Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision team began the work by hosting community conversations in six communities across the County in late 2015. During these conversations, community members were invited to share their thoughts, ideas and concerns about their individual communities and the County as a whole. The Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision Committee also took this as an opportunity to share initiatives already underway and resources created in recent years.



Through these Community Conversations and local survey results, the Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision Committee learned that **while there are many issues to be tackled in the County, we are all very proud of Muhlenberg** - the safe communities we live in, the Christian foundation that we share, and knowing that people will come together to help each other out. As we listened to over a thousand community voices, hundreds of ideas were collected throughout the county.



In the spring and late summer of 2016, County Summits were held where community members reviewed these ideas in groups, collaborating to identify the **six most important goals** for Muhlenberg County's future. Within each goal, individual initiatives were identified. The group then established priority initiatives and potential **"actions" for each goal**, allowing the County to make meaningful progress toward the future, one initiative at a time.

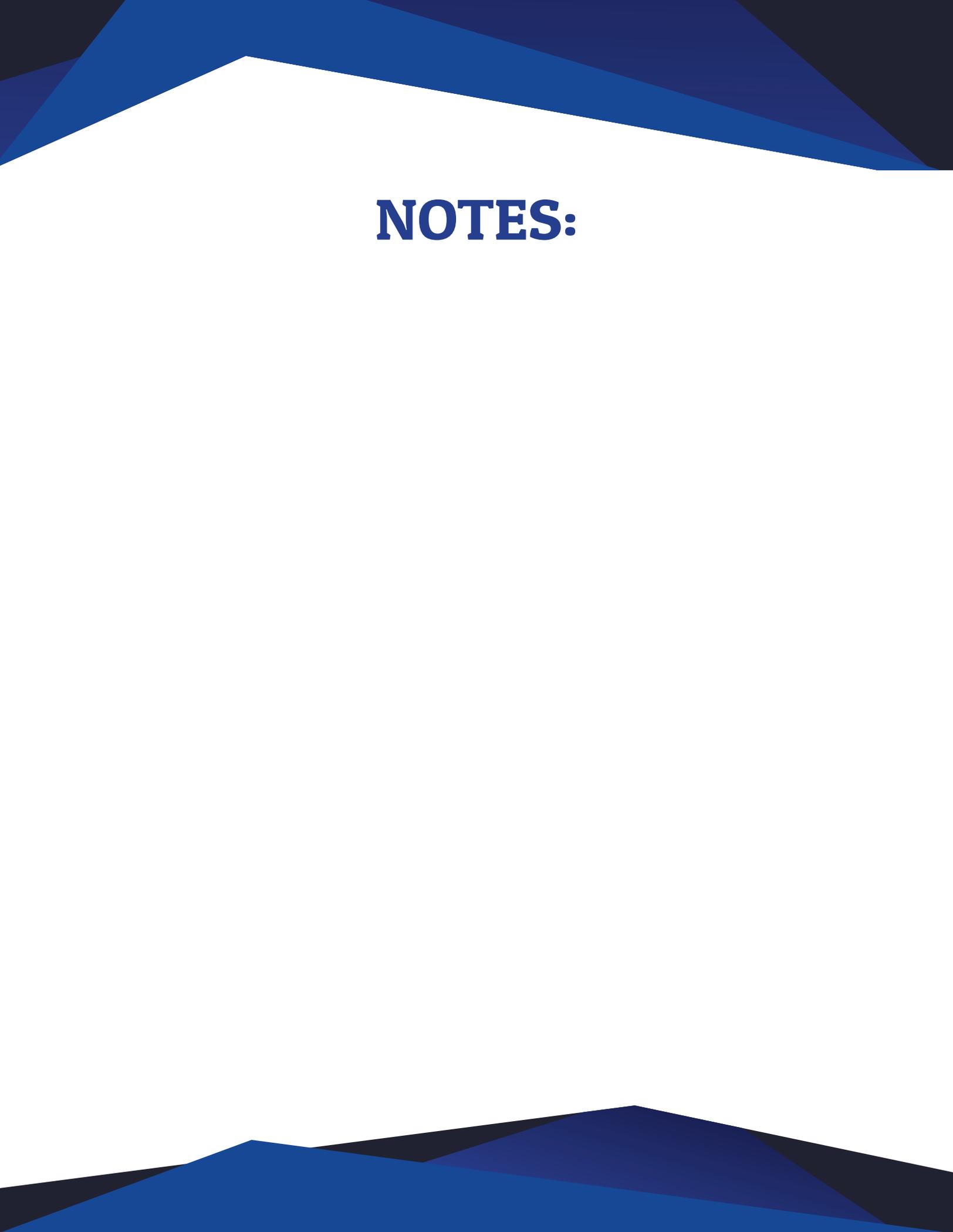
Since that time, the Muhlenberg 20/20 Vision team has worked to communicate the established goals and priorities to residents of the County and to mobilize groups to work on individual initiatives. We know that it will take **everyone working together** to resolve important issues and to continue to identify what the next priorities should be in order to move Muhlenberg County forward.





Over the next two years, Muhlenberg 20/20 will continue to engage the community to work toward the six Goals that Muhlenberg County residents identified. In fall 2018, the Vision team will return to communities throughout Muhlenberg to **share the work and successful projects** undertaken during the two years since County goals were established. The team will also engage residents to brainstorm about the next priorities for action to bring Muhlenberg closer to these goals. The success of Muhlenberg Vision 20/20 is and will be measured by successful projects, but also by continued **excitement and participation by Muhlenberg County citizens** making Muhlenberg County an even better place for our children and grandchildren.



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NOTES:

MUHLENBERG
20/20
VISION

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Funded by:

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